



VOLUME 1

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## INSTALLATION IN VANCOUVER

By REV. RUNOLFUR MARTEINSSON

A student in college looks forward to the time of his graduation; a boy in the catechetical class looks forward to the time of his confirmation; an apprentice looks forward to the time when he is a master tradesman. In the same way, the Icelandic Lutheran Congregation of Vancouver looked forward to the time when they would have a permanent pastor.

The preliminaries had been slow and difficult. The writer was sent by the Executive Committee of the Icelandic Synod in 1941 to survey the field. A small group of fine Christian people immediately came to his assistance, but the chances of establishing a congregation seemed remote. Most of the people thought it would bring nothing but discouragement to attempt it. But the Word of God and Christian work gradually warmed the people up to the idea that it was possible. A preliminary organization was formed, more and more people joined in the work, and in time a congregation was organized. The organizer was called as pastor, but at his age he did not accept but for a very short while. A permanent pastor was called, Rev. Dr. H. Sigmar of Mountain, N. Dak.

He accepted, and was to be installed Sunday, Sept. 9th. His great kindness prompted him to ask me to perform the act of installation. He himself is the president of our Synod. The vice-president, Rev. V. J. Eylands, should have officiated, but my previous connection with the work suggested me.

Thorough preparation had locally been made for this event. A program had been printed, pastors selected to take part in the service, the choir prepared by the choir leader, Mr. L. H. Thorlaksson, and organist, Mrs. H. N. Sumaridason, and refreshments made ready for a social time at the conclusion of the service. The weatherman also made ready for the event by giving us a perfect day from beginning to end. The Danish Church, where the Icelandic Con-

gregation worships, was also made ready by arranging rows of extra chairs. And the people came, 260 of them.

The service began at 7 p.m., with a processional by the choir, "Thee God We Praise," sung to Finlandia. Five clergymen formed the procession. Rev. H. S. Sigmar of Seattle, conducted the first part of the service and gave the charge to the congregation, an inspiring message and a challenge to wholehearted Christian work. Rev. T. A. Hartig, pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Vancouver, read epistle and gospel. Rev. Gudmundur P. Johnson of Blaine, Wash., read an installation lesson and led in prayer. I gave the charge to the pastor and spoke of the creativeness of the Holy Spirit in concrete work. Mr. C. T. Eyford, the secretary of the congregation, read letters of congratulations including one from Rev. V. J. Eylands of Winnipeg, and also a certification of the call from the congregation to Pastor Sigmar. The act of installation was performed by the writer, at the conclusion of which the service was turned over to the installed pastor. He based his remarks to the congregation on Romans 1:15-17, particularly on these words of the apostle: I am ready to preach the Gospel to you," a very suitable approach to the great work he was entering upon. The choir had already rendered another beautiful anthem, "Praise Ye the Father." The offering of the congregation was very generous.

At the conclusion of the service a social hour was spent in the down-stairs hall. There the new pastor, his wife and family, were welcomed by the congregation and other friends. Three sons were present: Rev. H. S. Sigmar of Seattle; Eric Sigmar, a theological student at Mt. Airy Seminary in Philadelphia, Pa.; and George Sigmar, at home. A daughter is in Minneapolis. The Women's Auxiliary of the congregation provided ample and delicious refreshments for everybody. Happiness pervaded the gathering.

I ask the prayers of all our people for this Icelandic Lutheran work in Vancouver. For

many years no congregation had been organized in our Synod. This youngster was particularly welcome into our family of congregations. The Mission Committee dealt kindly with us. It was a remarkable gesture of kindness to send a man all the way from Winnipeg to install a pastor in Vancouver. Never before has anybody in our Synod travelled so far to install a pastor. This generous attitude on the part of the Synod was, I know, very much appreciated by the congregation, and also by myself.

Let this kindly attitude and spirit of helpfulness continue. Vancouver is a very difficult field with some knotty problems. The congregation is without a church home, and needs one badly. But the field is a very important one and has splendid possibilities.

Lutheran congregations in New York State and elsewhere, that we had never heard of, sent this work gifts of lovely communion ware, beautiful altar and pulpit hangings, etc. Some lovely friends in Winnipeg gave us choir music. Let the congregations of our synod cultivate a warm-hearted attitude to this very necessary work in Vancouver.

This work would not have been possible without the support of the Board of American Missions of the U.L.C.A. It is giving generous support to it now. To them we are grateful.

May this Icelandic Lutheran work in Vancouver grow in numbers, in accomplishment, and above all in Christian power and sincerity.

God bless the new pastor, his kindness, sincerity and his wise firm energy. May our Heavenly Father guide him and give him an abundant measure of success.



## NOTES FROM BLAINE

By ELLA WELLS

On July 22, we were fortunate in having as guest speaker, Professor Asmundur Gudmundson of the University of Iceland. The text of his sermon was based on "The Prodigal Son"; "Come back to the Father Who forgives all," was his advice to the audience. His modest delivery and unpretentious manner won the hearts of the people.

A combined choir from the two Icelandic Churches provided the music with Mrs. Dora Russel as organist. Following the service a banquet was held at Larson's Cafe in honor of Prof. Gudmundson, after which he left for Seattle.

We are grateful to Professor Gudmundson for his pleasant but only too brief visit.

Rev. Johnson is now enjoying a vacation from his church work with services recommencing on the 19th of August and Sunday School

the first Sunday in September.

We hope to continue our work with new vigor and renewed strength, with the help of God.

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On May 20th, Pentecostal Sunday, a beautiful service was held at our church when nine young people were confirmed and approximately fifty took part in the Sacrament.

A full choir rendered special music with Mrs. Dora Russel as organist and soloist.

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The church was filled to capacity July 14th, when the whole community took part in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Johann J. Straumford on their fiftieth wedding anniversary. The bride and groom of fifty years entered the church to the strains of Wagner's wedding march from "Lohengrin" with Mrs. M. W. Irwin at the organ. Ushers were Doreen Gudjonson and Dona Felstead. The choir, under the direction of Prof. S. H. Helgason, rendered two Icelandic wedding hymns and Mrs. D. Russel sang "Because", accompanied by Mrs. Irwin.

Following the service at the church a reception was held at the Parish Hall and a program of music and speeches followed with Mr. M. O. Johnson as master of ceremonies.

Mr. A. Danielson, a fluent speaker, friend and co-worker for many years spoke in behalf of the groom. He related many incidents of pioneer days and in his work with Mr. Straumford in the church and civic organizations, emphasizing his dependability and steadfast convictions.

Rev. G. P. Johnson gave the toast to the bride and recalled among the many attributes her ever-present gracious hospitality.

Other speakers included G. M. Johnson, Rev. A. Kristianson, Kolbeinn Thordarson, Mrs. G. P. Johnson, Ella Wells and Mrs. Alfred Stefanson.

Mrs. Lillian Mix introduced the family and also the Hansens, intimate friends of long standing.

Miss Betty Therson spoke on behalf of the grandchildren and Mrs. Mix for the children.

Mr. Johnson read many messages of congratulations.

Mrs. Straumford's sister, Mrs. La Ma of Winnipeg, came to attend the anniversary of her sister's wedding.

Many beautiful gifts were presented and the honored guests responded in their gracious manner.

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As I am getting ready to mail this, I find the 19th of August is passed and our services

have begun, with Dr. H. Sigmar as guest speaker. This was a day of prayer and thanksgiving as the dreadful hostilities have ceased.

"God grant that we may see the day when all the people of the earth may have peace everlasting."

Following the service all were invited to the Parish Hall, where refreshments were served by Mrs. G. P. Johnson, assisted by her daughter Mrs. Russell, Kristin Gudjonson and Donna Felstead.



## SÉRA JÓN BJARNASON

### A Memorial Address delivered in part in the First Lutheran Church, Winni- peg, on June 22nd, 1945.

By REV. GUTTORMUR GUTTORMSSON  
Minneota, Minn.

By a happy coincidence we celebrate at this convention the sixtieth birthday of our Synod, and also the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Synod's founder, the late Dr. Jon Bjarnason.

Tonight I shall speak, briefly, about Dr. Bjarnason—or Sera Jon—as we affectionately called him in his lifetime. To me it is a pleasant task indeed, for he was my friend. But some people will no doubt seize upon this admitted fact and discount some of my observations. That point I do not care to discuss. Let me say this much, however, that genuine affection does not so much blind you to your friend's faults or shortcomings as it opens your eyes to his real virtues and gives you a sympathetic understanding of his character as a whole. My strong liking for Sera Jon has in some measure done me that service, I hope. At any rate, I shall try to point out the main traits, the fundamental qualities of his character and personality as I see them today.

Long before I met Sera Jon I had learned to respect him. It was in my boyhood days on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, when the onslaught of modern dissent and unbelief had swept the whole settlement like a whirlwind. A large portion of the people had withdrawn from our Synod and turned away from the traditional Christian faith. Religious questions had become an exciting and ever-recurring topic of conversation, something like the issues of a political campaign.

The dissenters especially were very talkative and sure of themselves. With the enthusiasm of new converts they were always ready and willing to argue against the old faith. And their books and papers gave them plenty of ammunition. As for the conservatives, they clung to their

faith with a commendable affection and loyalty, but to argue about it, that was another matter. They were not equipped to meet the new attacks. So their rejoinder consisted most in "viewing with alarm" and deploring the brashness, as they considered it, of the other faction.

This lack of defensive argument naturally gave added confidence to the dissenting group. They were sure that the historic faith was already dead and buried. And many a child growing up in the midst of this upheaval was carried along on the current of negation without gaining any proper understanding of the real issues.

But there were steady influences too. Once in a long while an evangelical minister would visit our village and hold services. I have described one of those visits elsewhere. Also, at times, we saw some of the writings of Sera Jon Bjarnason. His paper, "Sameiningin", had few subscribers in my neighborhood. But the sobering influence of his pen was felt there just the same. People would lend one another some of his writings, or quote from them. I even heard him quoted occasionally by youngsters in those days.

The earliest effect of his writings upon my own mind I can well remember. It was as when you hear a speaker bring out something that has cost him actual thought, something that sets you thinking too. Your attention perks up right away. A soul's travail has given you satisfaction. Such was my feeling when I read something from Sera Jon's pen, even in my boyhood. Here was a vigor of thought and expression that commanded immediate respect; he seemed to stand out among the writing men of his generation. And he was definitely on the evangelical side. That in itself was not without effect.

And what he wrote was often exceedingly thought-provoking. Not that he traded in heavy logic or abstractions; for his writing, though reflective in quality, was usually laid in the very thick of life, so to speak. And he certainly did not shun controversy, but dealt some very heavy blows upon occasion, as we all know. Nor can I say that he was in the habit of arguing the case of orthodoxy point by point, though he did occasionally meet a popular objection head-on, with telling effect. But he had a way of enlarging the scope of a question, or of throwing a new light on it, so that the difficulty was seen to lie, not in a doctrine or a system, but in life itself.

I have written elsewhere and in another connection about the value of the second look: You see a man coming up the street; by a casual glance you seem to identify him, but looking

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again, you see it is another person. Or a rock, say, or a clump of trees in the distance may give you an illusion that vanishes when you look more closely. It is the same with our judgment; what at first seems to be obvious is often an illusion. There are so many factors that may distort our view, such as the current fashion and the lustre of novelty, the spirit of age, or the charm and prestige of old things. What we need for the correction of such distortions is very often simply a more careful scanning of the scene before us.

Now it is no doubt true that the spirit of modern doubt and dissent has done Christianity a needed service in challenging old beliefs and forcing the believers to re-examine the ground and substance of their faith. But the dissenting movement itself was badly in need of a second look too. It was by no means as highly intellectual as it claimed to be. Some one has said that the popular unbelief of the 'nineties was simply the old barren dogmatism turned upside down. We might safely enlarge the bounds of that observation and still find a good deal of truth in it.

Here, perhaps, as far as mere intellect is concerned, lay Dr. Bjarnason's greatest service to his generation: by word and example he encouraged the habit of reflection. That characteristic is prominent in his writings almost everywhere. He has a way, for instance, of offering an observation which "at first sight" may seem to be true. This he promptly disposes of, and then he searches for a better solution of the problem. Sometimes he finds a definite answer; just as often there is a final insoluble mystery involved; but in either case, much wisdom is gained by the discussion. A well-known example of this method is his lecture **Motsagnir** (Contradictions), where a common argument against the Bible is found to involve deep and searching questions about Providence and human life.

He did not employ this method as a mere literary device or a mode of arguing; it reveals, rather, a deep-rooted mental habit. Sera Jon had made a long practice of looking into the less obvious aspects of a question, especially

where religion was involved; and he taught his people not to be afraid of catch phrases and plausible slam-bang arguments. He showed them the value of the second look.

I know very well that some people will deny this. It has long been maintained by certain of his opponents that Sera Jon was a purblind reactionary who neither practised nor counselled reflection; that he sought to stifle inquiry, to bind the faith in shackles of creed and dogma, to crush it under the weight of external authority.

When supported by argument, these accusations have always been found to involve a criticism of the evangelical faith itself; and not improperly so, for Sera Jon was an evangelical all his life, a conservative in religion, if you like. He not only believed that the gospel is true, he loved it with his whole heart. This was manifest in his writings; it was even more clear to the observing listener who heard him preach or offer prayer, or converse about religion.

To cherish and promote the living Christian faith was the sole concern of his life. A dead conformity in opinion or teaching, a religion of mere form and custom; "habit Christianity," as he called it—**vanakristindomur**—was to him not only deplorable, it was an outright abomination. He wrote, preached and fought against it continually. Speculative or dogmatic theology was good enough in its place, he believed, but when the doctrines themselves were represented as God's way of salvation, he spoke his mind very freely against that kind of formalism—"doctrinism" he sometimes called it.

It has been said that he depended on external authority for the bolstering up of his own faith and demanded from others the same sort of subjection. But this is a sorry distortion of the facts. The essence of Christianity was to him a simple childlike faith in the living Redeemer and not a mere set of teachings, accepted by note on the strength of somebody's say-so. Faith was no faith at all unless it had its roots in a living experience of the heart, he believed, and he never lost sight of that truth; it was central in all his preachings and in the greater part of his writings.

But neither the evangelical Christian nor any one else can get away from authority altogether. And Sera Jon, along with the great majority of Christians in all ages, believed that Christian truth was revealed by God, and therefore rested on divine authority. In this he did not go to extremes, however. His position may be stated somewhat as follows:

If you trust your soul to a divine Redeemer you must rely on his guidance in matters of

great importance, both as to faith and morals. If not, how can you say that you put your trust in Him? And the Scriptures, which are the primary source of all our knowledge about Him, derive from that very fact a unique sanctity, an authoritative position in the councils of Christendom.

And furthermore, Christians must work together for the defense and promotion of their faith. Christianity is not solely a matter of personal beliefs, it lives and thrives in a fellowship, a body of believers. Now, if the faith itself is of supreme importance to that fellowship, the members must agree on some statement, a common confession, defining the heart and substance of what they believe in common. Otherwise some of them may turn out to be in the brotherhood, but not of it, and may in fact be tearing down what the others are trying to build up. And then that house of faith is divided against itself.

A church enjoying religious freedom does not violate that freedom when it requires of its members a common statement of faith. No man's conscience is enslaved thereby, for any dissenter is free to leave that body and to join another which is more to his liking, or to organize one of his own, or go his way alone if he so desires.

This is a very simple statement of the confessional principle, as it is called. Dr. Bjarnason, along with the great majority of Christian leaders, subscribed to and favored that principle. But he did not believe that this principle should be so applied as to cover secondary matters of doctrine or interpretation. He freely admitted that in some respects he had never been a very stalwart Lutheran.

But in the sense and to the extent that I have indicated, he was a stalwart defender of the confessional principle. A simple faith in the New Testament Gospel was to him more important than anything else in life; and for any church or group of churchmen to play fast and loose with that faith was in his eyes, the worst kind of treachery. He despised indifferentism — the comfortable notion, so popular in our time, that one religion is as good as another. No man was more ready and willing to acknowledge moral worth wherever it was found, in believer or unbeliever. He greatly admired the manliness and sturdy intellectual honesty of Magnus Eiriksson, the Icelandic Unitarian, who, because of religious scruples refused to take a pastorate in the State Church. But when Sera Jon found responsible men confusing the common human virtues with Christianity itself, and trying to remove the landmarks between faith and unbelief, he bestowed upon such behavior some

of his choicest expressions of disapproval.

On intellectual and moral as well as religious grounds he protested against this haziness. His whole being opposed it. He always stood for the straightforward, the definite, in thinking and conduct, your first duty in any controversy was to face the issues honestly, to show your true colors and take the consequences. He urged his contemporaries to get "out of the fog." When he found a professed Christian faith and an outspoken unbelief "embracing, kissing, swallowing each other" in the approved manner of the times, he called it the most miserable of all sorry spectacles.

And Dr. Bjarnason practised what he preached. He stuck to his guns, though the trend of the times was against him and his stand on these issues exposed him to a continuous barrage of criticism and abuse year after year. For almost thirty years he could hardly pick up a copy of certain papers and periodicals issued in his own language, without coming upon a tirade against his principles, and often against himself. Most of these he never answered, but when he found an opponent and an article worthy of attention, he would reply, and do it with a will as he did all his work. Sera Jon was a strong man with strong likes and dislikes, and he had the gift of forceful expression. His rejoinder was often vigorous, clear-cut, unforgettable. And many people, remembering better the reply than the provocation, would form a one-sided opinion of the man and his controversial writings.

Because of the characteristics that I have been describing—his loyalty to the historic Christian faith, his resolute though moderate adherence to the confessional principle, his insistence upon definite landmarks in religion, his staunchness in controversy and his forceful style—he was misunderstood in some quarters and given the name of a bigot and an obscurantist.

It has been said that Sera Jon started out as a liberal, but shifted his course and wound up in the ranks of reaction. I do not deny that his character developed with the years, but fundamentally he was the same man first and last. He had the same outlook upon life, the same love of the Bible message and the Christian faith, and the same compulsion to defend both.

It might be said that he inherited his resolute fighting spirit from his viking ancestors, but in spirit he was more akin to the prophets. Like those ancient men of God, he felt himself under a holy compulsion to speak out, to bear witness against the root-evils of his time. And to him a root-evil was anything subversive of the Christian faith. Early in life Sera Jon came up

against a particularly doctrinaire and logic-chopping kind of orthodoxy. He did not like it; he felt that it was dangerous to the faith, and so he spoke out in bold and clear protest. And he frowned upon that same type of doctrinism all his life.

Afterwards his faith was challenged by the modern spirit of dissent, first in one form and then another; and how he met these challenges I have indicated already. It was the same faith and essentially the same conception of it that he was defending both early and late, first against hyperorthodoxy and later against the dissenters.

This is not an occasion for reviving old controversies. I do not maintain that Sera Jon was always right in his estimate of modern views or in his struggle against them. Modern dissent is a very manifold, fluid, protean movement; to grasp it fully or judge all its phases with finality is more than any man can do. History will give the final verdict. So if you think that Sera Jon made mistakes in dealing with modernism, I will admit that you are probably right. I do not even ask whether you agreed with him on the main issues or not. That is beside the point here. What I do maintain is that in the supreme concern of his life he consistently held a position that will command your respect, once you give it a good looking over; a position that was worthy of his character and intellect.

Sera Jon, like the rest of us, was tried on two counts at the bar of public sentiment. On the first count, his private character, he was found worthy. A sincere, upright man, on occasion stern, but a "square shooter," and wise and gentle in his everyday life.

On the other count, his public life, his stand on the larger questions of his time, many gave him that unfavorable verdict which I have described already.

These men hardly knew that what they approved and what they disapproved was in large measure molded by the same forces within. The chief of these forces was his love of the old Christian faith. For that faith he had labored early and late, sacrificed, suffered, fought, and sometimes dealt blows that were long remembered.

This same faith had made him, in his personal contacts, a very kindly, lovable man. He had that affectionate fineness of human touch that comes, as far as I know, only from long and intimate association with the Redeemer Himself. Sera Jon was good company, wholesome, genuine, cheerful; never sanctimonious, and yet his conversation was always uplifting. After a visit with him you felt that he had somehow made you a better man. In everyday manner

he was graciousness itself. His greeting was always a benediction.

Some men of opposing schools of thought, who had known him at first only through his controversies and whose first view of him was therefore unfavorable, later developed an esteem, an affection almost, for Sera Jon, when they came to know him personally.

The better you knew him, the more you were sure to like him.



## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

By GISSUR ELIASSON

When S. O. Bjerring, the former business manager of "Our Parish Messenger", brought the books and other material appertaining to that office over to me, it could be seen at a glance that our little magazine had received the operative advantages of an experienced hand and a conscientious mind. The files and mailing lists seemed letter perfect in every detail, which, of course, is nothing more than could have been expected of a man who has proven himself a master of such affairs, but they were more, for they showed abundant evidence of the utmost care and devotion which had been bestowed on them. One would iterate that here indeed was the manifestation of a labor of love (had this phrase not acquired such a saccharin flavor) for such personal interest had been bestowed on all matters within his department. Should this publication ever become defunct through lack of general patronage, there are few laymen that would lament its loss more than S.O.B., for he has worked hard for its progress during its first year and holds high hopes for its future welfare. Yet he is aware of this possibility, as can be gathered from the reply he made to my suggestion that it was seldom good policy to change horses in mid-stream, for he remarked with his typical good humor, "That may be true, but we have not yet entered the stream, for we are still deep in the woods—financially." There he was facing the fact that at present our subscription returns total a little less than one-third of the expenses involved annually in publishing our paper. Though countless other responsibilities have so preoccupied his time that he was forced to relinquish his official appointment he still retains an active interest in our paper, and its prosperity is of a deep concern to him. Mr. Bjerring was in every respect an ideal man for the office of business manager, and it was unfortunate that he finds himself unable to continue in that role. As his successor, I would like to share the genuine enthusiasm that he dis-

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# HALLGRIMUR PJETURSSON

(Continued from the May Issue)

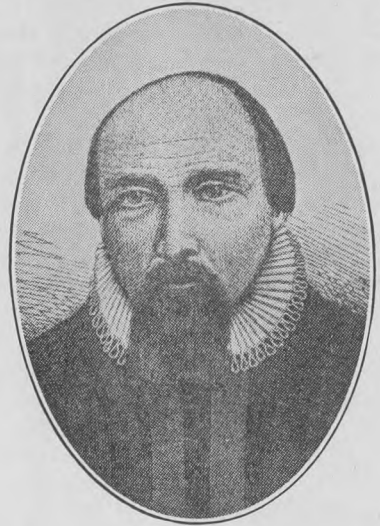
## IV.

The Passion Hymns are fifty in number. In them, Hallgrimur raised as it were, to use the words of Dr. Charles Vann Pilcher, who has translated many of these hymns into English "a mighty crucifix of song over Iceland, and thither, for two centuries and a half the weary and heavy laden have turned their eyes. He sang the theme of the ages, and his song has become immortal.

These hymns tell the story of Christ's last conflict from the moment He sang the Pascal Hymn with His disciples in the Upper Room, until the military watch was set and the seal was made fast upon the tomb. Each hymn consists as a rule of from fifteen to twenty stanzas. The poet begins by paraphrasing the Biblical narrative of that incident in the story with which he is about to deal, following that by interpretation and application. These hymns distinguish themselves from all previous and subsequent efforts of similar character in that they touch every note in the scale of human emotion, and have a strong intellectual appeal also. There is warmth of feeling in these hymns, there is sincere adoration, exalted songs of praise and thanksgiving, mournful repentance, thundering condemnation, bitter satire, skillful probing into the depths of human conscience, but above all, obvious sincerity in every word and line.

From the way of the cross one gets a clear view of the whole of life. First there is the communion between Christ and the disciples. The classic illustration of the weakness of human nature is the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ declares concerning his friends that the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Therefore men must watch and pray so as not to fall into temptation. The fourth hymn is a good example of how he handles his material. First is the text concerning the trip to the garden, the request that the disciples should watch and pray, Christ's prayer, his return to find his friends sound asleep, then immediately the application:

played and to be able to count on the good will and co-operation that he had merited and received from our readers. Tender Mr. Bjerring your gratitude and high regards, for he has earned them—but send me your subscriptions and names of new subscribers and remember that the best way to say "Thank You" to him is to get our publication out of the financial woods and into the clear.



*"Lord, wake in me love's burning fire;  
To watch with Thee, my heart's desire:  
The spirit longs to do Thy word,  
The flesh is weak: O, help me Lord."*

The sleep of the disciples becomes symbolic, and he applies the story to himself at various times of life. As Christ came to His disciples three times bidding them to remain awake, but finding them asleep each time upon his return to them, so it has been at three different times in his own life; in his childhood, youth and manhood. He asks Jesus to forgive him this sin, and wants never to be left alone. He wants to remain awake with Him in spite of the weakness of his nature, and he asks to be given strength to carry out his resolve. The disciples did not awake until the enemy had arrived. That should remind us not to be too sure of ourselves, judgment may come when least expected. Then comes the conclusion:

*"True Christian, never cease from prayer  
Temptation lurketh everywhere  
When comes the tired soul's battle hour  
'Tis prayer unlocks God's boundless power."*

*The body, when is quenched life's fire  
Lies cold, without sight, sense, desire.  
And so the soul, when prayer is fled  
Remaineth senseless, powerless dead."*

*Lord, watch within me night and day,  
That I in Thee may watch away  
When at life's end this flesh shall sleep  
My waking soul in safety keep."*

The Sixth Word of Christ upon the cross, serves as another illustration; Christ said: It is

finished. What was actually finished? Hallgrimur answers that question as follows:

*Finished for Thee the Law's command,  
Finished redemptions dread demand,  
Finished what prophets spake of old,  
Finished the grace thou shalt behold.*

Then following this exegesis comes the prayer:

*Help me my Savior day by day  
To tread where Thou hast shown the way.  
And finish in obedience true  
The work Thou gavest me to do.*

In the course of the trial of Jesus, Pilate attempted to set Him free, saying to the masses: Behold your King! Hallgrimur deals beautifully with this theme, and finds it a source of personal inspiration. Indeed, he carried his head high all through life in the face of all the nobles and aristocrats of his day, and in spite of his own physical infirmities, because he recognizes only one who is Lord and King over all, living and dead:

*"Thou art, O Christ, a King sublime  
The King of everlasting time.  
The King of angels, King of men  
Great King of worlds beyond all ken.*

*No worldly prize, no honor rare  
Can with this precious bond compare:  
I crown Thee Christ, my King, my Lord  
To be Thy slave my rich reward.*

I have tried to show you a few samples of these hymns according to the translation made of them by Bishop Pilcher. But and translation, of these hymns, and there have been many of them into Latin, German, Danish, and Chinese is a mere shadow compared to the substance of the original. Some one has said that it would be worth while to learn the Icelandic language if it were only to understand the intricacies, the word play, the implied meanings, and the wisdom sayings of the Passion Hymns of Hallgrimur Pjetursson.

It is said that Hallgrimur made a vow to compose these hymns of the Lord's Passion, if he were delivered from his tormentors in the Hvalsnes Parish. It is believed they were written in the course of about three years. Usually in the morning upon rising he would compose a couple or three stanzas. But in the year 1659 the entire work was revised, and re-written and finally published at Holar in a rather cheap edition in 1666. The 52nd edition was printed in Reykjavik in 1943. (De lux edition). Together with the original first edition was also printed Hallgrimur's immortal burial hymn,

which has been sung at nearly every funeral in Iceland for more than 200 years, "Alt eins og blomstrid eina" the concluding stanza of which runs like this:

*"Thus in Christ's name I'm living;  
Thus in Christ's name I'll die  
I'll fear not though life's vigour  
From death's cold shadow fly.  
O Grave, where is Thy triumph?  
O Death, where is thy sting?  
Come when thou wilt and welcome!  
Secure in Christ I sing.*

Hallgrimur's hymns and poems have been so thoroughly assimilated into the nation's mode of thinking and philosophy of life that it is hardly possible to open an Icelandic book without finding some of the proverbs of the Passion Hymns, sometimes put there without the author being aware of their origin, and a great number of its wisdom sayings are rated with the sayings of Havamal (Oracles of the Gods) in the consciousness of the people.



## GOD CALLS US STILL

*What wilt Thou have of me, my Lord?  
I cannot speak nor sing Thy praise;  
I cannot preach Thy sacred Word  
Nor lead my brother in Thy ways.  
What wilt Thou have, O sinless One,  
Of me, the weakest of my race?  
Send someone else of quicker tongue  
To speak to souls of sin and grace.*

*Thus we excuse ourselves, my friends,  
While God is calling us to work.  
We labor much for selfish ends,  
But when the Master calls, we shirk.  
We seek to gratify our lust  
For pomp and show, and human praise,  
And witlessly we build on dust  
While wasting priceless, fleeting days.*

*Across the tumult of our years  
God calls us yet His work to do;  
And hearts are yearning through their tears,  
But lo! the messengers are few!  
No base excuse can justify  
Our cool neglect to do His will,  
For He has promised to supply  
The needed grace. God calls us still!*

OLIVER EVERETTE